

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for performing usage-based billing for a business entity using a local computer system coupled to a database and a remote computer system, the business entity having customers subscribing to a usage-based billing program, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting into the remote computer system meter data relating to equipment usage by one of the customers, the meter data including at least one of an amount of usage of a piece of equipment, equipment serial number, model number, meter reading date, and customer name;

generating an export file by processing the meter data at the remote computer system, the export file including a plurality of data records;

transmitting the export file from the remote computer system to the local computer system for storing within the database;

applying validation rules to the export file at the local computer system to determine the data records included within the export file that satisfy the validation rules, wherein one of the applied validation rules determines whether data representing an amount of usage of a piece of equipment included within the corresponding export file is invalid;

generating an error report identifying the data records included within the export file that violate at least one of the validation rules including identifying data records that violate at least one of the validation rules due to at least one of a processing error at the local computer system and an inputting error at the remote computer system;

generating at the local computer a correction report including a list of all the data records listed on the error report, a corresponding reason for the data record to be listed on the error report, and a list of possible corrective actions to correct the data record for satisfying the validation rules;

correcting each data record listed on the error report such that each data record listed on the error report satisfies the validation rules;

generating a corrected export file including the corrected data records; and

transmitting an invoice for payment by the customer for usage of the piece of equipment based on the corrected export file.

2. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 1 wherein the meter data is received in a predefined format.

3. (original) A method according to Claim 2 wherein the meter data is contained in an export file containing at least one of asset serial number, model number, meter reading date, an invoice number, amount of receivable, customer name, coverage begin date, coverage end date, and service credits.

4. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 1 wherein the meter data is inputted into the remote computer system via the Internet.

5. (original) A method according to Claim 1 wherein the validation rules comprise at least one of asset or serial number not found; serial number or serial number/model number are not unique; the account is not active; current meter date is not a valid date; current meter date is more than 30 days ago; current meter date is less than previous meter date; current meter date must be within 2-5 days of the "expected" meter date; invalid current meter reading; current meter reading less than previous meter reading; dealer provide meter credits; calculated overage charges by dealer does not equal preset amount; excess amount is greater than \$1500; if consolidated account, all assets readings not received in file; duplicate readings.

6. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 1 further comprising automatically correcting at the local computer the data records identified as processing errors.

7. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 6 further comprising the step of automatically transmitting a data file including the data records identified as input errors to the remote computer system for correction.

8. (original) A method according to Claim 1 further comprising the step of providing that the error report is accessible via a web site and notifying a dealer that corrections are awaiting input.

9. (original) A method according to Claim 8 wherein the error report lists rejected data records, an explanation of the reason the record was rejected, and the file name and date the record was sent.

10. (cancelled)

11. (cancelled)

12. (cancelled)

13. (currently amended) A computer for performing usage-based billing for a business entity having customers subscribing to a usage-based billing program, the computer comprising a processor in communication with a database, said computer programmed to:

receive meter data relating to equipment usage by one of the customers, the meter data including at least one of an amount of usage of a piece of equipment, equipment serial number, model number, meter reading date, and customer name;

generate an export file by processing the meter data, the export file including a plurality of data records;

store the export file within the database;

apply validation rules to the export file to determine the data records included within the export file that satisfy the validation rules, wherein one of the applied validation rules determines whether data representing an amount of usage of a piece of equipment included within the corresponding export file is invalid;

generate an error report identifying the data records included within the export file that violate at least one of the validation rules including identifying data records that violate at least one of the validation rules due to at least one of a processing error and an inputting error;

generate a correction report including a list of all the data records listed on the error report, a corresponding reason for the data record to be listed on the error report, and a list of possible corrective actions to correct the data record for satisfying the validation rules;

prompt a user associated with the business entity to correct each data record listed on the error report such that each data record listed on the error report satisfies the validation rules;

generate a corrected export file including the corrected data records; and

transmit an invoice for payment by the customer for usage of the piece of equipment based on the corrected export file.

14. (original) A computer according to Claim 13 wherein the meter data is contained in an export file containing at least one of asset serial number, model number, meter reading date, an invoice number, amount of receivable, customer name, coverage begin date, coverage end date, and service credits.

15. (previously presented) A computer according to Claim 13 wherein the validation rules comprise at least one of asset or serial number not found; serial number or serial number/model number are not unique; the account is not active; current meter date is not a valid date; current meter date is more than 30 days ago; current meter date is less than previous meter date; current meter date must be within 2-5 days of the "expected" meter date; invalid current meter reading; current meter reading less than previous meter reading; dealer provide meter credits; calculated overage charges by dealer does not equal preset amount; excess amount is greater than \$1500; if consolidated account, all assets readings not received in file; duplicate readings; wherein each data record that passes all validation rules is then processed in the mainframe system for invoicing the lessee for the service payment.

16. (previously presented) A computer according to Claim 13 further programmed to automatically correct the data records identified as processing errors.

17. (previously presented) A computer according to Claim 13 further programmed to automatically transmit a data file including the data records identified as input errors to a remote computer system for correction.

18. (original) A computer according to Claim 13 further programmed to:

generate invoices related to equipment usage;

apply received payment to open invoices; and

create a payables data file, said file comprising at least one of check number, check amount, payment detail by asset, service payment breakdown by base service and overage charges, dealer invoice number and customer name.

19. (currently amended) A database for performing usage-based billing for a business entity, the business entity having customers subscribing to a usage-based billing program, said database comprising:

a data field including data corresponding to meter data relating to equipment usage by one of the customers, the meter data including at least one of an amount of usage of a piece of equipment, equipment serial number, model number, meter reading date, and customer name;

a data field including data corresponding to an export file generated by processing the meter data, the export file including a plurality of data records;

a data field including data corresponding to validation rules applied to the export file to determine the data records included within the export file that satisfy the validation rules, wherein one of the applied validation rules determines whether data representing an amount of usage of a piece of equipment included within the corresponding export file is invalid;

a data field including data corresponding to a generated error report identifying the data records included within the export file that violate at least one of the validation rules including identifying data records that violate at least one of the validation rules due to at least one of a processing error and an inputting error;

a data field including data corresponding to a generated correction report including a list of all the data records listed on the error report, a corresponding reason for the data record to be listed on the error report, and a list of possible corrective actions to correct the data record for satisfying the validation rules;

a data field including data corresponding to a prompt for display on a computer for correcting each data record listed on the error report such that each data record listed on the error report satisfies the validation rules;

a data field including data corresponding to a generated corrected export file including the corrected data records; and

a data field including data corresponding to transmitting an invoice for payment by the customer for usage of the piece of equipment based on the corrected export file.

20. (original) A database according to Claim 19 further comprising validation rules, said validation rules comprising at least one of asset or serial number not found; serial number or serial number/model number are not unique; the account is not active; current meter date is not a valid date; current meter date is more than 30 days ago; current meter date is less than previous meter date; current meter date must be within 2-5 days of the "expected" meter date; invalid current meter reading; current meter reading less than previous meter reading; dealer provide meter credits; calculated overage charges by dealer does not equal preset amount; excess amount is greater than \$1500; if consolidated account, all assets readings not received in file; duplicate readings.

21. (previously presented) A database according to Claim 19 further comprising an error report accessible via a web site and notify a dealer that corrections are awaiting input.

22. (original) A database according to Claim 19 further comprising a payables data file comprising at least one of check number, check amount, payment detail by asset, service payment breakdown by base service and overage charges, dealer invoice number and customer name.

23. (currently amended) A system for performing usage-based billing for a business entity having customers subscribing to a usage-based billing program, said system comprising:

a client system comprising a browser, the client system configured to:

receive meter data relating to equipment usage by one of the customers including at least one of an amount of usage of a piece of equipment, equipment serial number, model number, meter reading date, and customer name, and

generate an export file by processing the meter data, the export file including a plurality of data records;

a database for storing information; and

a server configured to be coupled to the client system and the database, the server system further configured to:

receive the export file from the client system;

apply validation rules to the export file to determine the data records included within the export file that satisfy the validation rules, wherein one of the applied validation rules determines whether data representing an amount of usage of a piece of equipment included within the corresponding export file is invalid;

generate an error report identifying the data records included within the export file that violate at least one of the validation rules including identifying data records that violate at least one of the validation rules due to at least one of a processing error at the server system and an input error at the client system;

generate a correction report including a list of all the data records listed on the error report, a corresponding reason for the data record to be listed on the error report, and a list of possible corrective actions to correct the data record for satisfying the validation rules;

prompt a user associated with the business entity to correct each data record listed on the error report such that each data record listed on the error report satisfies the validation rules;

generate a corrected export file including the corrected data records; and

transmit an invoice for payment by the customer for usage of the piece of equipment based on the corrected export file.

24. (original) A system according to Claim 23 wherein said database further comprises validation rules comprising at least one of asset or serial number not found; serial number or serial number/model number are not unique; the account is not active; current meter date is not a valid date; current meter date is more than 30 days ago; current meter date is less than previous

meter date; current meter date must be within 2-5 days of the “expected” meter date; invalid current meter reading; current meter reading less than previous meter reading; dealer provide meter credits; calculated overage charges by dealer does not equal preset amount; excess amount is greater than \$1500; if consolidated account, all assets readings not received in file; duplicate readings.

25. (previously presented) A system according to Claim 23 wherein the error report is accessible via a web site for prompting a dealer that corrections are awaiting input.

26. (previously presented) A system according to Claim 23 wherein the server system is further configured to automatically correct the data records identified as processing errors.

27. (previously presented) A system according to Claim 23 wherein said server is further configured to automatically transmit a data file including the data records identified as input errors to the client system for correction.

28. (original) A system according to Claim 23 wherein said server is further configured to:

generate invoices related to equipment usage;

apply received payment to open invoices; and

create a payables data file, said file comprising at least one of check number, check amount, payment detail by asset, service payment breakdown by base service and overage charges, dealer invoice number and customer name.

29. (currently amended) Apparatus for performing usage-based billing for a business entity having customers subscribing to a usage-based billing program, said apparatus comprising:

means for receiving meter data relating to equipment usage by one of the customers, the meter data including at least one of an amount of usage of a piece of equipment, equipment serial number, model number, meter reading date, and customer name;

means for generating an export file by processing the meter data, the export file including a plurality of data records;

means for applying validation rules to the export file to determine the data records included within the export file that satisfy the validation rules, wherein one of the applied validation rules determines whether data representing an amount of usage of a piece of equipment included within the corresponding export file is invalid;

means for generating an error report identifying the data records included within the export file that violate at least one of the validation rules including identifying data records that violate at least one of the validation rules due to at least one of a processing error and an inputting error;

means for generating a correction report including a list of all the data records listed on the error report, a corresponding reason for the data record to be listed on the error report, and a list of possible corrective actions to correct the data record for satisfying the validation rules;

means for prompting a user associated with the business entity to correct each data record listed on the error report such that each data record listed on the error report satisfies the validation rules;

means for generating a corrected export file including the corrected data records; and

means for transmitting an invoice for payment by the customer for usage of the piece of equipment based on the corrected export file.

30. (original) Apparatus according to Claim 29 wherein the meter data is contained in an export file containing at least one of asset serial number, model number, meter reading date, an invoice number, amount of receivable, customer name, coverage begin date, coverage end date, and service credits.

31. (original) Apparatus according to Claim 29 wherein the validation rules comprise at least one of asset or serial number not found; serial number or serial number/model number are not unique; the account is not active; current meter date is not a valid date; current meter date is more than 30 days ago; current meter date is less than previous meter date; current meter date

must be within 2-5 days of the "expected" meter date; invalid current meter reading; current meter reading less than previous meter reading; dealer provide meter credits; calculated overage charges by dealer does not equal preset amount; excess amount is greater than \$1500; if consolidated account, all assets readings not received in file; duplicate readings. Each data record that passes all validation rules is then processed in the mainframe system for invoicing the lessee for the service payment.

32. (previously presented) Apparatus according to Claim 29 wherein said means for generating an error report comprises means automatically correcting the data records identified as processing errors.

33. (previously presented) Apparatus according to Claim 29 further comprising means for automatically providing a data file including the data records identified as input errors to a dealer for correction.

34. (original) Apparatus according to Claim 29 further comprising:

means for generating invoices related to equipment usage;

means for applying received payment to open invoices; and

means for creating a payables data file, said file comprising at least one of check number, check amount, payment detail by asset, service payment breakdown by base service and overage charges, dealer invoice number and customer name.

35. (original) Apparatus according to Claim 34 wherein said payable file further includes a header record that identifies which data elements should be used by OMD Task 1Y to match the data in the payable data file to the dealer's payable data in the OMD software.

36. (currently amended) A computer program embodied on a computer-readable medium executable by a computer for performing usage-based billing for a business entity having customers subscribing to a usage-based billing program, said program comprising at least one code segment that:

receives meter data relating to equipment usage by one of the customers, the meter data including at least one of an amount of usage of a piece of equipment, equipment serial number, model number, meter reading date, and customer name;

generates an export file by processing the meter data, the export file including a plurality of data records;

stores the export file within a database;

applies validation rules to the export file to determine the data records included within the export file that satisfy the validation rules, wherein one of the applied validation rules determines whether data representing an amount of usage of a piece of equipment included within the corresponding export file is invalid;

generates an error report identifying the data records included within the export file that violate at least one of the validation rules including identifying data records that violate at least one of the validation rules due to at least one of a processing error and an inputting error;

generates a correction report including a list of all the data records listed on the error report, a corresponding reason for the data record to be listed on the error report, and a list of possible corrective actions to correct the data record for satisfying the validation rules;

prompts a user associated with the business entity to correct each data record listed on the error report such that each data record listed on the error report satisfies the validation rules;

generates a corrected export file including the corrected data records; and

transmits an invoice for payment by the customer for usage of the piece of equipment based on the corrected export file.

37. (previously presented) A computer program according to Claim 36 further comprising at least one code segment that automatically corrects the data records identified as processing errors.

38. (previously presented) A computer program according to Claim 36 further comprising at least one code segment that automatically provides a data file including the data records identified as input errors to a dealer for correction.

39. (previously presented) A computer program according to Claim 36 further comprising at least one code segment that:

generates invoices related to equipment usage;

applies received payment to open invoices; and

creates a payables data file, said file comprising at least one of check number, check amount, payment detail by asset, service payment breakdown by base service and overage charges, dealer invoice number and customer name.

40. (currently amended) A method for performing usage-based billing for a business entity using a local computer system coupled to a database and a remote computer system, the business entity having customers subscribing to a usage-based billing program, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving at the remote computer system meter data relating to equipment usage by one of the customers, the meter data including at least one of an amount of usage of a piece of equipment, equipment serial number, model number, meter reading date, and customer name;

generating an export file by processing the meter data at the remote computer system, the export file including a plurality of data records;

transmitting the export file from the remote computer system to the local computer system for storing within the database;

applying validation rules to the export file at the local computer system to determine the data records included within the export file that satisfy the validation rules, wherein one of the applied validation rules determines whether data representing an amount of usage of a piece of equipment included within the corresponding export file is invalid;

generating an error report identifying the data records included within the export file that violate at least one of the validation rules including identifying data records that violate at least one of the validation rules due to at least one of a processing error at the local computer system and an receiving error at the remote computer system;

generating a correction report including a list of all the data records listed on the error report, a corresponding reason for the data record to be listed on the error report, and a list of possible corrective actions to correct the data record for satisfying the validation rules;

prompting a user associated with the business entity to correct each data record listed on the error report such that each data record listed on the error report satisfies the validation rules;

generating a corrected export file including the corrected data records; and

transmitting an invoice for payment by the customer for usage of the piece of equipment based on the corrected export file.

41. (original) A method according to Claim 40 further comprising the step of generating a meter correction report identifying the data that violates a validation rule.

42. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 41 further comprising the step of receiving an updated meter correction report, and applying corrections contained in the updated report to data stored in the database.

43. (original) A method according to Claim 42 further comprising the step of applying validation rules to data contained in the updated meter correction report.

44. (cancelled)

45. (cancelled)